



Making a Difference

The real story of our progress in Iraq.



Congressman Gil Gutknecht
First District, Minnesota
November 2003



In any panorama, if you look at only one section, you'll get a distorted view. Accounts of progress in Iraq are no different. One account is that terrorists are still at large. Americans are attacked daily; some are killed.

Another is that infrastructure is being repaired and improved, Iraqi children have returned to school, Iraqi police are patrolling the streets, the economy is being restored and democratic principles are taking root.

Both are accurate. The question is, which will we allow to prevail?

We are bringing democracy to Iraq and security to America.

Many of you have told me, "We don't hear enough about the good things happening in Iraq." That's why I'd like to share with you the following stories and information. We are doing good things. We are bringing democracy to Iraq and security to America.

Nearly two-thirds in Iraqi capital say ousting Hussein was worth hardships.

Even in Baghdad, part of the so-called 'Sunni Triangle' where most violence has occurred, residents by more than a 2-to-1 (62% to 30%) margin say ousting Hussein was worth any hardships. By a 67% to 8% margin, Baghdad residents say Iraq will be better off in five years than before Coalition action. (Source: Gallup survey of 1,178 Baghdad residents, 8-28 to 9-4, 2003)

Compare the reconstruction of Iraq to the rebuilding of Germany after WW II:

It took three years to get an independent central bank in Germany.

In Iraq, it took two months.

It took 14 months to get police established in Germany.

In Iraq, it took two months.

It took three years to get a new currency in Germany.

In Iraq, it took two and a half months.

It took 14 months to get a cabinet in Germany.

In Iraq, it took four months.

We are proud of our Americans in uniform. As in generations before, we are bringing hope and leaving blood in a nation that has lived under oppression for too long.

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Firsthand accounts of
progress and change.



"I caught wind of and read the recent news articles back there in the States. I figured I could clarify some things for you. The countryside is getting more safe by the day.

What is going on with the country's infrastructure? Everything is going well! The railroad is running again! The railroad has not run since 1991. The highways and bridges are being repaired. In the city of Hillah, the power stays on 24 hours a day, and it has more power than prior to the war. The markets are open. The Seabees have rebuilt all of the schools and put in furniture and chalkboards.

Commerce is running. New money is being printed. The Iraqi Dinar has stabilized and is now increasing in value.

So, in short, this is the straight scoop about what is up over here. Thanks again to all of you for your support."

-Excerpt by Navy Senior Chief Art Messer of the U.S. Navy Seabees, published in the Claremont News and West Concord Enterprise, September 17, 2003

"The questions I get from a lot of people here are, 'What's going on over there? Why is there so much fighting?' When I first heard that, that's when I realized that the news was not proportionate to what was going on.

Starting from Kuwait, we saw pretty much every city along the river on the way to Baghdad. People absolutely loved us everywhere we went. Kids would run out of their houses just to wave at us, just to get a wave back from us. I'd have people come up to me and say, 'What took you so long?'"

-Excerpt by Josh Ingram, a 20-year-old machine gun squad leader in the 3rd Battalion of the U.S. Marines, published in the North Coast Journal (CA), September 4, 2003



Expressions of hope from those who are doing the hard work of freedom.

To date, 22.3 million doses of measles, tuberculosis, hepatitis B, diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus and polio vaccines have been provided – enough to vaccinate 4.2 million Iraqi children.

The lives of Iraqi children are improving.

Nearly all Iraqi children have finished their exams from last year and have started a new school year. Saddam Hussein's hateful rhetoric is being removed from textbooks. All universities have reopened.

The juvenile institution for children, the subject of reports of abuse and appalling conditions under Hussein, has been replaced by a UNICEF-run project. Nearly 3,000 soccer balls were shipped earlier this summer and another 60,000 balls are on their way.

Children are learning. Children are playing. There is hope in the lives of Iraqi children.

U.S troops were recently asked, "What do you want the Iraqi people to know about America's mission?"

"We want to free the citizens of Iraq from oppression and brutality, in order that you may choose your preferred way of life without fear of persecution, retribution or execution."

Master Chief Petty Officer, U.S. Navy, from Summerville, SC

"We want to restore Iraq and give her back to the citizens who live here. We want to see Iraq grow and prosper in a way that the people of Iraq will no longer have to live feeling threatened, without basic necessities, and without the common decencies that every human being deserves."

Sergeant, U.S. Marine Corps, from Champlain, NY

"We are not here to take over [Iraq], we are here to liberate it and give them a better way of life."

Staff Sergeant, U.S. Air Force, from Columbus, GA

"I'm here to free [Iraq] from an evil dictator, to allow the people of Iraq to have freedom of speech, freedom of expression, freedom to think for themselves, freedom to be independent, freedom to be educated, and to know what it is like to be a human being instead of being treated as a puppet."

Lance Corporal, U.S. Marine Corps, from Jersey City, NJ

Congressman Gutknecht displays the thousands of 'Support of Troops' messages with soldiers at Ramstein Air Force Base in Germany. Gutknecht brought the banner from Rochester and delivered it to the soldiers he met with during an official trip to Germany.



Mail call is the most important part of the day!

I have had the opportunity to visit with several Minnesota soldiers – in Germany, at Walter Reed Medical Center and in Minnesota – who are recovering from injuries sustained in Iraq. Please let these brave Americans know how much we appreciate all they do.

For those of you asking what you can do to support our service members, visit www.defendamerica.mil and click the 'Support Our Troops' button. You'll find a broad listing of organizations that are sponsoring programs for members of the armed forces overseas. Or you can call our office, and we'll put you in touch with the right folks.

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*Congressman Gutknecht discusses the status of
our National Guard at the opening of the Mankato
Training and Community Center.*




Gil Gutknecht

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